

THE
Commonweal

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

Castro's "Operacion Verdad"
by James Finn

PERENNIAL PROBLEM

Ads in the Catholic Press
by Robert G. Hoyt

AN AUTHOR'S DOOM by Thomas F. Curley
MAN AND WRITER by Garry Wills
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LATE FOR THE PATER NOSTER by Helmut J. Golatz

THE DOWNSIDE REVIEW

THE WINTER NUMBER is not afraid of controversy. There is spirited criticism of the present editions of Gregorian chant, and a call for return to the real texts, with the rider that these are something any parish could and would sing. No parish priest or musician should miss this article. Then there are three articles on philosophy: Dr. Charles Hartshorne is one of the contributors, although he does not go unchallenged. I. T. Hale has something to say about Lonergan's "Insight" and its attackers. Order your copy now.

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Write to: The Secretary

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THE Commonweal

A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

—week by week—

LABOR REFORM—AGAIN

CONGRESSIONAL battle lines over proposals for labor reform legislation are already drawn. So far as we can see, there is little difference between the line-up on the subject in the Eighty-sixth Congress and that in the previous session. Indeed, the proposals and counter-proposals, maneuvers and counter-maneuvers, have about them a somewhat stylized air, as all concerned follow a familiar and predictable pattern.

Senator John F. Kennedy began the proceedings by introducing his labor reform bill, a slightly revised version of that which he co-sponsored in the last session with Republican Senator Ives. The Kennedy proposals grew out of the hearings of the McClellan Committee, and they include requirements for full reporting of union financial data; secret-ballot elections at set intervals; criminal penalties for false reporting or embezzlement of union funds; disqualification of those convicted of a felony from holding union office.

In addition to provisions for labor reform along these lines, the Kennedy bill would amend the Taft-Hartley law by giving men on strike the right to vote in union representation elections and by relaxing union shop provisions in the construction industry. Union leaders have long wanted such changes, and these portions of the Kennedy bill are described as "sweeteners" to assure labor support for his bill.

After Senator Kennedy's proposals were put forward, the Administration bill on the subject of labor reform was introduced by Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona—a somewhat unfortunate beginning dictated by the fact that Senator Goldwater is the senior Republican on the Senate committee involved. In reality the Administration bill is far more moderate than any Senator Goldwater would be likely to write on this subject, and its

provisions should be viewed as coming primarily from Secretary of Labor James Mitchell rather than from Senator Goldwater.

As far as corrupt practices are concerned, the Administration proposals for labor reform are not very much different from those advanced by Senator Kennedy. The big difference is in the changes proposed in the Taft-Hartley law. Here the Administration measure includes two proposals strongly favored by business and just as strongly opposed by labor. One would strengthen and extend curbs on secondary boycotting; the other would outlaw what employers describe as "blackmail picketing" and what unions call "organizational picketing"—that in which the union does not represent a majority of the employees of the firm involved.

INITIAL DEBATE on the two labor reform measures followed the expected course. Senator Goldwater denounced the Kennedy bill, Senator Kennedy assured the Senate that his bill would "virtually" put Teamster president James Hoffa "out of business," and Secretary of Labor Mitchell vigorously defended the Administration measure, while going out of his way to disassociate the proposals as much as possible from Senator Goldwater, the bill's nominal sponsor. There were no surprises, and it seems likely that if events continue to follow this predictable pattern, the results will be identical with those in the previous session of Congress.

The last time around, it will be remembered, the Kennedy-Ives bill was an anti-racketeering measure pure and simple, without any controversial efforts to amend Taft-Hartley one way or the other. After much discussion, the measure passed in the Senate 88 to 1, only to die in the House because all-or-nothing advocates of a "tougher" measure

insisted on amendments which had little or no chance of winning a majority.

On labor-management questions, relatively small things very often take on tremendous symbolic value. In the case of amendments now being debated, we have the feeling that this is exactly what is happening. For years labor and management have been fighting for amendments in the Taft-Hartley law—labor in the direction of the “sweeteners” in Senator Kennedy’s bill, management in the direction of those in the Administration’s measure. Both sides clearly feel strongly on these issues and are prepared to fight for their views.

At the same time, there is general agreement in Washington that insistence by either side on including its pet proposals in an anti-labor racketeering bill will again mean no legislation at all. Such an outcome, in our opinion, would be extremely unfortunate.

We are for a labor reform bill, now as always, and we do not think either labor or management should insist on “sweeteners” as the price for their support of any reasonable effort in this area. Compromise may mean that the measure eventually passed will be less than perfect, from the point of view of both labor and management, but when did Congress last pass a “perfect” bill? The legislative process normally demands that all parties-at-interest settle for less than a full loaf, and there is no reason for expecting anything else in this case.

Perhaps we misread public sentiment in this matter, but we are convinced the American public wants a labor reform bill, and soon. If we are correct on this, blocking the passage of such a measure could be a very risky business indeed—a thought we recommend to both sides as the debate in Washington continues.

NEXT WEEK

GEORGE N. SHUSTER writes in the Catholic Book Week Issue about *An American Amen*, by Father John LaFarge, S.J.

“His latest book suggests that the ‘examination of the liberal conscience’ is long overdue. It may well be that the average citizen will not consider this an enterprise of major importance. To propose it, however, is to stake out a watershed in the national history, or at least that part of it which is concerned with the religious life. . . .”

DEBATE OVER MISSILES

THE TRUE STATE of America’s missile capability in relation to that of the Soviet Union has not been much clarified by the recent expert testimony and opinion. President Eisenhower and his Secretary of Defense, Neil H. McElroy, surprised no one by maintaining that the United States is doing just fine, that the danger of the missile gap is exaggerated, that Russian achievements have been overplayed, that the defense budget is adequate for the maintenance of national security.

Similarly unsurprising is the Democratic argument that the Administration has suppressed facts on the missile situation, that the Soviets have a dangerous lead in these weapons, that the new budget puts economy before security.

What is disquieting about this debate, however, is that the stands taken by the opposing spokesmen cannot be verified by any known facts. The figures on past, present and future missile production, by this country and the U.S.S.R., are in the first place military “secrets” and in the second place, especially as regards future production, only estimates, of greater or less reliability.

Then there is the matter of weighing and interpreting the information that is available. For instance, the Administration does not deny the Soviet lead in the missile race, although it does insist that this lead is smaller than has been claimed; Administration leaders simply say that the Russian missile lead, whatever it is, is not significant in terms of the balance of weapons. All that is necessary, says Defense Secretary McElroy, is that the United States maintain its power to retaliate massively in case of enemy attack, and our present missile and bomber strength gives us such power. In this view, the chief threat to the United States will continue to be, for several years to come, Soviet ground forces and bombers.

Critics of the Administration insist that it is reckless to permit the Russians to achieve a great lead even in “first generation” missiles. There will be an increasing risk, they say, that a sufficient number of Soviet missiles could cripple U.S. retaliatory power by knocking out the S.A.C.’s major bases and the comparatively few missile sites.

It all boils down to a question of confidence in the one who makes the interpretation. And there’s the rub. Administration reassurances in the past were woefully and dangerously mistaken—on such matters as Soviet development of the A-bomb, H-bomb, jet fighters, I.C.B.M., sputnik, lunik, etc., etc. Soviet advances have been consistently mini-

mized; U.S. developments have been rosily described; critics and questioners have been dismissed as unpatriotic or as prophets of doom. Thus we are not comforted. Washington officialdom claims that it knows best, but its record in these matters gives us no reason to think this is true.

PREVENTABLE TRAGEDIES

THE CRASH of an American Airlines jet-propelled plane into the East River, only a half-mile short of the La Guardia runway, was properly termed tragic. Of the seventy-three passengers and crew only eight survived, and the tragedy is that the crash may well have been preventable.

Investigation into this accident revealed that the plane was cleared for an instrument landing, that the runway on which it was to land had a radio beam that indicated proper direction toward the runway but no "glide path" beam to indicate proper height. The installation of such a "glide path" beam, which some pilots are reported to have asked for, has for some time been under discussion by the Federal Aviation Agency and the Port of New York Authority. Technical difficulties, they said, made the installation difficult. In opposition to the Airline Pilots' Association, these groups expressed doubt that the absence of the beam accounted for the accident. As it very properly should, the investigation continues.

WHAT KIND OF AUSTERITY?

PRESENT FEARS of inflation reflect other factors than the recent oscillations of the price level, now in a stationary phase. The fact that this plateau is maintained because of lower food prices may well imply that it is only temporary. A rather marked "flight from the dollar" has been noted in recent months, with the dollar yielding preeminence to several European currencies. And in 1958 the massive American gold reserve was drained of some two and one-half billions. Doubtless such developments involve certain welcome changes—stronger national economies, less one-sided international trade, better prospects for international maintenance of the gold standard, etc. But they do indicate less confidence in the American dollar.

Apparently what has supplied the real jolt in this matter is the difficulty the Treasury Department is experiencing in floating its new bonds and in persuading investors whose bonds are maturing

to take new ones (at higher interest) instead of cash. Of course this year's thirteen billion dollar deficit could by itself explain much.

If most Americans oppose inflation, their opposition takes varied forms. There are those who believe with the President that retrenchment, in order to attempt to balance the budget, is the only solution. Others, laying the burden of the blame on a national economy operating only at partial capacity, would advance policies that by increasing the Gross National Product would increase tax revenues sufficiently to close the gap. Many who oppose inflation would accord a higher priority to other objectives at this stage of the cold war and in view of the present state of the national economy. That is, they would incur the risks involved in substantially greater expenditures this coming year for things vitally needed—on the assumption that within, say, another year, a budget balanced at a higher level would be keeping inflation in check.

That is, roughly, the way the main lines are drawn. There can be little question that the national economy is lagging. In view of such factors as our three million annual population increase, the steady growth of our labor force and the annual increase of productivity-per-man-hour in U.S. industry, the present G.N.P. is far below what it should be. This lag is partially responsible for the current deficit and contributes toward inflation. Unemployment continues at a high level, certain key industries and populous localities are still hard hit. For millions of Americans such essential facilities as housing, classrooms and hospitals remain intolerably inadequate. There are substantial domestic needs to take up productive forces now unused. And more jobs mean greater demand for all sorts of products, lesser relief burdens and greater tax revenues.

On the world scene, where the struggle with the Soviet Union shows little sign of abating, greater, rather than lesser, expenditures are called for. There are the inferior state of our defenses and the destinies of our Latin American neighbors and of the still uncommitted Afro-Asian peoples to reckon with. Accompanied by the blandishments of Communism, the underdeveloped nations of the world find themselves confronted with the crucial problem of a livelihood for populations which are pressing down on limited productive resources at an accelerated rate.

Clearly these are hardly normal times. Is it possible to meet the challenge with an approach that stresses retrenchment? This is a policy which its advocates regard as one of responsibility (as opposed to "wild spending") and austerity (in con-

trast with the luxury of lavish appropriation). It is hard to see how this country can retrench at this stage and still meet its responsibility at a moment when the cold war is actually going against us. And would not a policy that depended squarely on greater individual self-sacrifice be more deserving of a title to "austerity" than one emphasizing budgetary caution in a threatened world?

ITALY'S CABINET CRISIS

WHEN, AFTER SEVERAL shaky votes, the government of Premier Fanfani resigned, the Italian political prospect turned cloudy. The trouble is that the Christian Democrats, even if united, do not hold quite enough seats in the national parliament to govern by themselves. There is a strong Left-of-Center element in the party—and Signor Fanfani was himself a member of that group. This makes cooperation with monarchists and other small groups of the extreme Right a problem. On the other hand, the Italian Socialists make dubious allies. Giuseppe Saragat's Right-Wing Socialists have been far from numerous or effective. And they are now splitting into two groups.

The Christian Democrats require a minimum of twenty-six additional seats for a working majority, but they are simply not available among the other political groups. Premier-designate Antonio Segni, for all his experience and skill, is therefore having difficulties reminiscent of the French Fourth Republic in forming a new government. And the trouble is that there are few signs that new elections would win the Christian Democrats the parliamentary majority they would need.

MR. ROCKEFELLER'S PROGRAM

TAX AND BUDGET problems are perennial, and about this time of the year they weigh heavily not only upon the taxpayer, but upon federal and state legislators. Because of the recession, apparently, states across the entire country are now being faced with increasingly hard choices between tax increases and reduced spending.

In New York, which already has an impressive budget, Governor Nelson Rockefeller has asked the New York Legislature to approve a new and challenging tax program which would increase revenue by \$277,000,000 for the fiscal year 1959-60. The Governor has requested, among other changes, the adoption of a withholding system, the lowering of

exemptions, and the adding of higher brackets to the rate scale.

This bold plan has brought pleasure to almost no one, Republicans, Democrats or taxpayers. Many Republicans were distressed that Mr. Rockefeller did not try to place responsibility for the increases on the outgoing Democratic regime. They were further aggrieved, particularly those whose recent political victories were dependent upon a slight majority, that they would have to ask their constituents for more taxes. But the Governor's widespread popularity, upon which many of them believe their own political fortunes to depend, and his as yet undistributed patronage have quieted much of the opposition before it fairly voiced itself. As for the Democrats, they had largely to depend upon Controller Arthur Levitt to dispute the validity of the Governor's figures and estimates; but this was short on political mileage. And, not to be overlooked from a Democratic viewpoint, the Governor had included in the state budget an allotment of fifteen million dollars to help Mayor Wagner balance the city's budget.

The Governor encountered heavy opposition from articulate voters. Of the eight hundred forty-three letters on his program, he said that "two were for; I'm framing them." Such opposition Mr. Rockefeller must have anticipated, particularly from family groups which were the hardest hit. Yet with his tax program the Governor has shown himself to be a forceful, imaginative person. The outcome of the program is yet unsure, and all may not fall before Governor Rockefeller's insistence. But his program will be noted by many legislators and voters; it is intended for New York, but the reverberations will be felt even in California.

MISS CALLAS SUES

FROM MILAN comes a recent note about one of the finest and one of the most famous of modern opera singers. The fame of Maria Callas, it is generally acknowledged, derives not entirely from her operatic abilities, at least as these are displayed on the stage. For while critics acclaim her singing, they frequently deplore what is generally termed "temperamental" off-stage behavior.

But critics can differ even here, and Miss Callas is now suing a newspaper critic for describing her singing as "amateurish hamming." We can understand Miss Callas' objection. Her hamming, we think, has not been evident in her singing, and it is surely less than justice to call it amateurish.

Castro's "Operacion Verdad"

The leaders of the revolution and the Cuban people consider outside criticism of the way they have tried and executed prisoners to be unjust and uninformed

by JAMES FINN

ABOUT FIFTY journalists and newsmen boarded the plane which was to take us to Cuba. The island of Manhattan, which at night can look like a sparkling, multi-colored jewel and whose towering landmarks are not soon lost to sight, melted swiftly into the haze as the plane lifted into the air on the initial step of what was to bear the label "Operacion Verdad" (Operation Truth).

No one was in doubt about why the invitation, issued in the name of Fidel Castro and Dr. Jorge Quintana, Dean of the College of Newspapers, bore the label it did. After the long and arduous struggle which finally resulted in the overthrow of the dictator Fulgencio Batista, the revolutionary rebels and the Cuban people were smarting under the criticism directed against the Cuban war trials. In many countries, and notably in the United States, the trials and subsequent executions had been termed "blood lettings" and "blood baths" and a reversal of expected justice. This criticism, the Cubans said, was unjust, not because it was ill-intentioned but because it was misinformed. If the truth were made known, the criticism would surely reverse itself. And so the invitation was extended to hundreds of reporters from North and South America, from England and the U.S.S.R.: come, observe and judge for yourselves.

Although "Cuban time" was clearly devised for people who naturally procrastinate—almost no event, regardless of its importance, was held on time—the days were crowded and there was much to observe. The several spectacular events which have been most widely reported could not be most decisive in forming any judgment, but they were, in different ways, impressive.

The great rally that took place our first day in Cuba

Mr. Finn, an associate editor of *The Commonwealth*, recently returned from Cuba.

set the stage. The huge crowd that gathered before the Presidential Palace to hear Castro explain and defend the actions of the revolutionary government began to stream in from all parts of the city early in the day. Trucks, cars and taxis were pressed into service and many people looked as if they had walked the many miles they claimed. But there was no weariness evident, only jubilant energy, and the bright sun-washed streets were made more colorful by the ever-present red and black, the colors of the Revolutionary Movement of July 26, and by the many signs and banners in both Spanish and English which demanded "Punishment for the Guilty" and asserted that "We Reject Yankee Intervention."

MEMBERS OF THE press were to have been admitted to the Palace before the ceremonies got under way, but no one had foreseen the crowd which filled every space within a mile of the Palace. After several unsuccessful attempts to approach it, I managed to reach it with the help of one of the *barbudos*, the bearded rebels. With his rifle held high above his head, both to protect it and to gain attention, he made a way through the crowd where others would have been helpless, for the Cubans responded to the *barbudos* with evident affection and admiration.

After short addresses by President Manuel Urrutia, other dignitaries and rebel leaders, Fidel Castro appeared. He was calm and patient as he motioned for the cheering crowd to be quiet. After some words about the eloquent testimony provided by the presence of so many Cubans, estimated by him at over a million, Castro launched into his main theme—the justification for the execution of those who were termed war criminals. No explanation was due the United States, he said, but only to the Cuban people. The United States had forfeited the right to criticize by being silent

in the face of the atrocities of the Batista regime, and of the present rulers of Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic. As for those who were being executed, they were guilty of the most shocking crimes and revolutionary justice would be thwarted if they went unpunished. The "will of the people" was being followed.

As he spoke, the terms "truth" and "revolutionary justice," "revolutionary justice" and "truth," threaded through his address like motifs picked up, repeated and elaborated. And as he spoke it became increasingly clear that some real intention of his talk ran counter to his declarations. For even as he asserted the independence of Cuba and denied the need to offer explanations to foreign powers he presented to them his concept of revolutionary justice and asked that their false reports be replaced by true. Even while he denied the influence of criticism issuing from the United States, his speech was being fashioned to answer it. Much like a person trying to deny what he implicitly acknowledges, his actions contradicted what his words asserted. He appeared, this acclaimed leader of the Cubans, intelligent and vigorous, independent, sensitive and immature. If his address alone would not persuade a critic that "revolutionary justice" was necessarily just—and I think it would not—it might well convince him that Castro was sincere and determined. And to judge only by a single incident, he is long-suffering; after his speech he allowed himself without complaint to be patted and poked, prodded and pulled by an encircling group of admirers.

SIMILAR confusion was evident at Castro's press conference. Scheduled for nine o'clock, it typically enough started after eleven and lasted for about five hours. About the whole procedure there was an amiable air of disconcerted informality. For some time Cuban officials, newsmen, rebels and interlopers mingled in easy confusion, so that the room looked much as if an unrehearsed crowd scene were being directed by amateurs. But out of this emerged a valuable exchange. The actual questions-and-answers were preceded by slides of the atrocities which were perpetrated and catalogued under Batista's regime. They were truly horrifying and repulsive, the acts, one had to think, of sick minds. And as image after flashed image assaulted the emotions, one wanted to call a halt to this accumulation of horror. But one was forced to be impressed, once again, with the reign of terror under which the Cubans had lived for some years. And it can be called nothing less, for these people lived with the knowledge that those who were even suspected of being critics of Batista were open to unspeakable tortures: they might be brutally beaten, have their nails torn loose, their eyes pierced, their hands and feet ruinously burned; they might be castrated and painfully wounded before they were finally killed.

In the conference which followed the slides, which were intended as background for his remarks, Castro again asserted principles of the new regime. The Cuban revolution could face the world honestly; the evidence was in the willingness to face criticism and to open all doors of information to the newspapers, a powerful weapon for truth. No, we are not Communists; we believe in social justice. We will never oppose the people; the day the majority is against us we will go. Our revolution has been most orderly; the Red Cross will testify that we did not kill prisoners, as did Batista's men, but treated them well and frequently released them without weapons. There is no example to equal this. We insist upon the "dignity of the person"; we want not vengeance but just reprisals.

Castro patiently awaited each question and tirelessly responded, while President Urrutia, who sat on the elevated stage behind him, interjected only one or two comments. It was evident that Castro felt alienated from and critical of United States officialdom and that a bond existed between him and other South Americans. And there was a vague but enthusiastic response when Castro spoke of "the dream in one's heart," of seeing the American countries bound in closer unity—meaning, of course, Latin American.

THE CONFERENCE ended not long before the start of the first Havana war trial in the huge Sports Coliseum. This trial, which brought a death sentence to Major Jesús Sosa Blanca, was witnessed by almost eighteen thousand spectators and lasted almost thirteen hours. In the course of those hours approximately fifty witnesses streamed before the tribunal, and the T.V. cameras, while Sosa Blanca sat quietly, his only movement a steady gnawing at his upper lip. When asked if he had anything to say Sosa Blanca replied, "No one will hear me, for I am in the Coliseum of Rome." The comparison was almost inevitable and, once made, seemed irresistible to many writers who developed it at some length in North American newspapers. But a comparison of what actually took place that night with the representation which appeared in many publications should be enlightening.

The trial was held in the Sports Coliseum with the obvious intention of displaying before the world the method of the Cuban courts martial. For this purpose one of the most notorious prisoners was called. And, although witness after witness was dismissed for offering only hearsay evidence, the evidence against him mounted throughout the afternoon, evening and early morning. Many people criticized the proceedings, of course, saying that under such circumstances, apart from the calm and quiet of orderly procedure, justice could not be accomplished.

But such a judgment, made with no allowance for the present temper of the Cuban people, does less than

justice to the proceedings. That it was probably a mistake to hold this trial under such pitiless publicity was acknowledged by the fact that no other trial was thus held. But it was a mistake made by a regime that is still new and uncertain and, therefore, oscillates between assertive independence and righteous self-justification, a government that can scarcely be expected to have settled down into the ordered routine of normal life. And to say that the choice of circumstances was a mistake is not to say that justice therefore miscarried. Within the limitations which the circumstances imposed upon them, circumstances which were hardly to be resisted, the court proceedings were orderly and correct. Any valuation of Sosa Blanca's trial that is made outside the frame of these considerations would be at least questionable.

More extensive and incisive criticisms, of course, have been levied against the earlier summary trials. They could only be held because the constitution, which forbade capital punishment, was overridden. The trials were not civil but military, and the tribunals were composed entirely of rebels, frequently very young and without training. Further, the defendants had little time to prepare a defense. The safeguards that are necessary to ensure a fair trial were obviously lacking, it is charged, and justice necessarily gave way to vengeful expedient.

These are serious charges and cannot be overlooked. But they must be seen in the context of recent Cuban history. So common and so vicious were the executions under the reign of Batista that the "capital punishment" clause of the constitution was rendered farcical. Ideally it might have been reestablished by the rebels when they took over. Practically, one doubts that this would have been possible. The rebels did take prisoners during the war and did treat them properly. Further, they brought with them into the cities a surprising order and discipline. These are tokens, not to be lightly dismissed, that the rebels consciously act with a respect for law and order. The prisoners whom they try are soldiers and properly come under the military code. And, though here there is conflicting testimony, the trials which received so much criticism in the U.S. followed a general pattern which could compare favorably with military trials in the States.

THE IMPRESSIONS I received from these several events—the large rally, the press conference and the trial—were reinforced by talks I had with priests, professional people, rebels, students, Cuban newsmen, prisoners, and the wives and widows of rebel fighters. Only among the prisoners were there frequent criticisms of Fidel, and even here he had some supporters. One grants that neither the testimony of all these people nor their overwhelming approval of Castro and the executions could make right something that is in-

trinsically wrong. But their strong feelings should make one face the probable alternative to the trials. There is little in the history of any revolution to make one believe that it could have been more orderly and restrained. There is, indeed, strong reason to think that the remarkable self-control of the Cuban people, everywhere evidenced, depends upon their belief that the present government will see that the criminals are fairly but swiftly tried.

There is a matter of emphasis here which may make a crucial difference in one's own attitude to the continuing trials. The larger context of the trials has been lost to most Americans, and the responsibility rests primarily upon the wire services and newspapers which, with notable exceptions, served their readers in the United States less well than did their counterparts in Europe and South America.

Apart from the handling of the war trials, on which no final judgment can yet be made, there are other large questions about the direction Cuba is to take. Is the economy sufficiently stable to recover itself and offer jobs to the many unemployed? What political life will now emerge in this country imbued with democratic ideas but so long subjected to tyrannies? And what part will be played by the labor unions, which provided little support to Castro and in which the Communists are most active? And, of great importance to our foreign policy, what relations will Cuba establish with her South and North American neighbors?

Many of the answers to these questions will depend upon the program of the *Fidelistas* who are now united only in their allegiance to Castro and who still look to him for a program. Other answers will depend upon President Urrutia and the Cabinet, which now contains experienced, responsible men. As for the Communists, there seems to be no group in the Cuban labor movement that is equally trained and dedicated. Their main opposition may yet come from a small but highly select group of young Catholics trained in *Agrupacion Catolica Universitaria*. Much will also depend upon what political and economic ties the United States now forms with Cuba.

The United States is too powerful and too involved with Cuba's economy not to have strong influence. But much of this influence will be dissipated if not actually reversed unless there is more understanding when the need arrives. At present there is misunderstanding on both sides, but if our country is as mature and responsible as it asserts itself to be, it should be the more willing to extend itself for a government which is coming under heavy criticism before it gets fairly under way. "Operacion Verdad" may not have accomplished all that its designers intended, but it should cause many Americans to realize that their knowledge was too limited for them to rest easy in flat criticisms of the revolutionary government.

Ads in the Catholic Press

by ROBERT G. HOYT

IN PREPARING for this article on ads in the Catholic press, I wrote to a friend who sells advertising space in Catholic publications. I wanted his ideas on the policies and attitudes of the Catholic Press toward advertising.

His reply gave me pause: he suggested that I forget the whole idea. A critical discussion of this problem, he said, properly belonged in the Catholic trade press. The recitation of horrible examples in a general magazine would spread the false impression that all Catholic publications observe low standards in judging advertising copy. It would provide "some of our friends in the secular press" with usefully nasty material on the ethics of the Catholic press. And it couldn't accomplish anything beyond getting people mad at The Commonweal (and me).

These objections have a certain weight, but I think they are overborne by other factors:

First, Catholic Press Month ought not to be observed solely by hosannas and hurrahs in praise of the virtues of the Catholic press, even though they are considerable. There should also be some thinking done, out loud, about its specific problems. The Catholic press engages in critical discussion of current issues; there is no reason why it should exempt itself from the same kind of examination. Furthermore, we are forever saying that our readers are our partners in this enterprise; if we mean it seriously we should not be afraid to discuss our problems openly.

Secondly, putting a "private" label on those problems of a given field that involve ethical standards makes for greater comfort but not for higher standards. In any case, this particular problem is not easily kept private; the ads are there.

As I hope will appear, however, it is not my purpose merely to scold. But it does seem necessary to document the existence of the problem—by looking at the ads—before suggesting any solutions to it.

AMONG THE ADS I have examined in Catholic papers and magazines for the purposes of this article, one example will underline the immediacy of the prob-

lem. This ad announces the availability of an item known as a "personal denture dish." Such a dish is undeniably useful, but this one is suggested as a gift, and the purchaser is promised that "the lucky recipient will be so thrilled, he'll want to put his teeth in at once." One would be careful of time and place in presenting such a gift. Not quite so funny is the fact that this item, essentially a small plastic box with a name of your choice lettered on the top, is priced at a dollar and a quarter—plus fifteen cents postage.

The mention of dentures recalls the impression you get from some publications that most American Catholics are constantly embarrassed and irritated by false teeth that Slip, Slide or Wobble. It would appear also that Catholics along with the pluralistic readers of true confessions and physical culture pulps, suffer heavily from ills and deficiencies of distressingly intimate nature. All of these afflictions, however, may be cured, relieved, or disguised by products offered through the Catholic press; and the offers are painfully explicit, often illustrated, and always announced in bold headlines with the details in agate type.

Readers who get eyestrain from dwelling on the ads have the solution at hand: they can order glasses through the mail. The ad says: "MAGNIFYING GLASSES . . . make small type LOOK BIG. A Blessing for Folks Over 40. Read the fine print of newspaper, telephone book or Bible easy. Do fine fancy work, crocheting for hours without eyestrain. Now precision MAGNIFYING GLASSES (not RX) bring out detail SHARP and CLEAR. . . ."

I like the candor of "(not RX)." And there is some comfort to be had in the realization that anyone who could read the ad wouldn't need the glasses.

Without intending to I once did some remote research for this piece by sending for a pair of binoculars advertised in a Catholic paper. The price was low but it was too much for the device the firm sent me. What it lacked, essentially, was an essence. It had a material cause, a formal cause, and an efficient cause, though the last of these sounds odd. But it had no final cause. You *could* see through it, but not as well as you could see without it.

Advertisements of religious articles pose a different

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problem. It jumps out sometimes in the very title of the item offered; for example, the "Holy Miracle Cross." And consider this copy, used to sell a "Meditation Rosary": "Remember—'Those who shall recite my Rosary piously, considering its mysteries, will not be overwhelmed by misfortune, nor die a bad death. The sinner shall be converted, the just will grow in grace and become worthy of eternal life.'—Promise of Mary, Queen of the Rosary." Just what is it that this firm is selling?

Juxtaposed in a recent issue of one paper were two ads for two different purgatorial societies. Perpetual enrollment in one at a cost of ten dollars gave the deceased person enrolled a share in 3,600 Masses, several annual novenas, special daily prayers by students, seminarians, and priests, and special monthly Masses. But a similar offering sent to the other would give the enrolled persons the benefits of more than 4,000 High Masses yearly and remembrance in 200,000 other Masses; a special Mass would be said on notification of the death of a living member. Aside from the fact that the ads leave out certain refinements of doctrine, this kind of competition is hardly edifying.

To get at another type of religious advertising you really need pictures. I refer to ads for religious gadgetry. There is, for instance, the Musical Madonna, at five dollars and ninety-five cents: a white statue on a wooden base containing a music box that plays "Ave Maria." A refined version at twenty-three ninety-five has simulated stained-glass windows that open as the music box plays. Still another has a rosary drawer, plus an electric cord. Plug it in and this "exquisitely sculptured Madonna statuette glows softly with comforting concealed light." This last, it is said, "makes any room a private chapel." I am happy to report that one diocesan paper not only rejected this ad but published as an editorial the scathing letter of rejection it had sent to the agency submitting the copy.

THUS FAR we have furnished the perennial critics of the Catholic press with some juicy quotes. But now it is necessary to provide a context for them.

First, let it be acknowledged—and given full weight—that the examples I have cited are carefully selected. You could do a similar job on almost any group of publications containing advertising. The *Saturday Review* recently exposed some completely phony drug ads appearing in reputable medical journals. Moreover, it is arguable that the offenses contained in the ads mentioned here are petty compared with the high-toned assaults on our sanity committed in the big slicks, in the daily press, and on television. And here it is not only the means that are evil—the exploitation of sex, the slanting of a magazine's entire tone and message, the misapplication of psychological research—but the ultimate end sought: the creation of all-con-

suming desire, the plasticizing of personality so that it may be shaped to the image of the advertiser's need. In this perspective the errors of Catholic publications look grubby, but hardly vicious.

Also, it should be stressed that many, possibly most, Catholic publications observe high standards in this regard. Many diocesan papers carry no ads of the types I have described.

Finally, the Catholic press has problems: costs of publication, costs of getting and keeping circulation. Religious publications often encounter unusually stiff resistance when they raise subscription prices. And, in trying to get advertising revenue, they run up against a traditional taboo, which apparently became a Madison Avenue law shortly after the street was paved. Repeating the ancient formula, the media man tells the space salesman: "Gosh, Bill, I can't use the Catholic paper(s). If I do the Presbyterians and the Adventists and the Southern Baptists and forty-eleven other outfits will be hounding me. I just haven't got that kind of money in my budget. You see how it is." The Presbyterians and the Adventists, of course, hear the same thing.

When you combine these special financial difficulties of the Catholic Press with its high sense of mission, the feeling of publishers and staff members that they are doing a vital work which must go on, you account in large part for the low-grade advertising that appears in its pages. I think many of the ads mentioned above are in clear conflict with the norms of advertising ethics set down by the Catholic Press Association's Code of Fair Publishing Practices. But you can't pay the printer with a code of ethics. He wants cash, cash comes from advertisers; junk ads are distasteful, but not clearly immoral. Ergo. . . .

The trouble with this line of reasoning is not only that it slides over the moral question too quickly. It also omits to mention the effect of advertising content on the rest of the publication. What happens to a treatise on the sacraments when it runs alongside a gruesome cut of somebody's arthritic joints? What happens to an editorial on business or union ethics that follows a full-page ad announcing semi-miraculous results from use of Dr. Jones's Liver Extract?

Still more pertinent to the point I hope to make is the effect of running low-grade advertising on the chances of getting high-grade advertising. A smart advertiser is more careful of the company he keeps than is a convent-bred debutante. The more respectable the firm, the less it wants to be associated with mail-order junk and pinworm remedies. Hence the fact that a Catholic publication keeps open house for ads of the latter type is not only an anomaly, it is apt to be a long-run commercial liability.

And yet—how does a publication get around the unwritten law of national advertising: that sectarian rival-

ries make it inadvisable for an agency to contract for space in religious publications?

THE ADVERTISING agencies' fear of using religious publications for their messages is grounded at least in part on the belief that they cannot use one or several without using all. If they buy space in *Presbyterian Life* and not in *Columbia* or the *Sign*, they expect to be accused of anti-Catholic bias. They could bear up under the mere accusation; the trouble is that the accusers have means to publicize their grievance. It will not help the profit-and-loss statement if increased sales among Presbyterians are canceled by losses among Catholics.

It seems conceivable that joint action of the major religious publishers, or their professional associations, might find a formula for eliminating this fear, if it is genuine, or for exposing it if it is an alibi. The publishers might normally agree, first of all, that the purpose of advertisements is not to support the publications in which they appear but to sell goods and services. Hence the only proper basis for an agency's decision to use or not to use a given denominational publication is the publication's advertising effectiveness.

Unfortunately there is no way to judge this effectiveness with complete objectivity. Catholic space buyers might easily be more readily impressed with the selling power of a Catholic magazine than with the potentialities of a Protestant organ. Publishers, acknowledging this fact, would have to agree to ignore it; or at least to keep their protests and appeals within the communications field. They would operate on two assumptions: First, that an occasional case of prejudice against Presbyterian, Methodist, or Catholic media should be accepted for the sake of eliminating the bias against all religious media; second, that advertisers, once the way is open to them, will tend to follow the logic of their institution rather than their personal preferences: they will buy space that seems likely to return a profit.

A second proposal is not really mine: it is based on the experience of a businessman who has to advertise in the Catholic press because of the nature of his product. In his opinion the reason Catholic publications can't sell national advertisers is that they don't know enough about what they are selling. What they offer as market research is not impressive to experienced media men; their "studies" use the jargon but do not have the solid backing of the self-promotion offered by secular media. They are "loosely structured," which is to say, they assert far more than they can prove.

The same witness testifies that he has found little correlation in the Catholic press between advertising rates and advertising results; some publications are asking far too much, others too little. The rates for comparable services vary more than they should—nearly six hundred per cent in the case of diocesan papers,

more than eight hundred per cent in the case of magazines—so that a national advertiser encounters extreme difficulty in computing the ratio between costs and results. My business friend advises, therefore: "Throw out the junk ads; do the research, get some case studies; get the rates in line with the facts; then sit on the agencies' doorstep till they get tired of stepping over you."

There is a final point: what will be the result of reasonably candid readership studies of the Catholic press? In some cases, of course, the findings will be gratifying both to editors and to salesmen. In others I think they will have to be buried. I think they will reveal that too many of our popular-level publications are speaking at the reader instead of to him. We are lecturing too much, listening too little. We are forever trying to mold our readers, too seldom studying their needs, interests, circumstances and preferences. Obviously, I don't mean that Catholic publications should carry more sex and sensation, or that they should forget their didactic purpose. I would not deny, either, that the Catholic press has improved remarkably. But I think most of the improvement, especially in the diocesan press, has been technical rather than creative or genuinely professional.

We are still not sufficiently in touch with our readers; we are excessively ecclesiastical, relatively humorless, relatively narrow in the range of our interests and techniques. We report words (speeches, panel discussions, interviews, resolutions) far better than we present events, atmospheres, or personalities. Our apologetic and public relations functions are too much present in our minds; abhorring sectarianism, we fall into it too often. And all of this means that we are not having the impact we could and should have.

Hence, though I would heartily endorse the notion of thoroughgoing readership surveys, I would suggest that the first purpose of making them should be editorial. The expression of reader preferences should not be immediately translated into editorial directives, of course; the preferences should be treated as raw data to be pondered, discussed, used.

There is no need to labor the connection between such efforts and the potential results on the business side. It is not true that advertisers will joyously flock to buy space in a good Catholic paper or magazine; they have to be sold. But a good Catholic paper will be read closely and regarded as a friend. Therefore it will be a good medium for good advertising, which is of course the only kind of advertising it will accept, and advertisers will come to it more readily. This is a consummation devoutly to be wished, provided that any profits that may turn up are plowed back into the publication. Some day, not soon, the country might realize that the Catholic press is there, and that it tells much truth not elsewhere available.

THE NOT SO DEFIANT ONES

COMMUNISM-IN-HOLLYWOOD, a headline fixture which, since the days of Martin Dies, has received almost constant consideration from Congressional watchdog groups and patriotic organizations, has always had its ironic overtones. There was a time, twenty years ago, when Communism was downright fashionable among the boys and girls of the silver screen. Proletarianism was taken up like a sunny new faith. But though the Party exploited the political naiveté and child-like enthusiasm of its Hollywood converts, it never succeeded in bolshevizing the movie colony's "swimming-pool Reds," as they were contemptuously described by less affluent radicals.

When the heat was on, a decade later, most of these erstwhile "revolutionaries" fell over one another in their eagerness to confess their sins (and the sins of their former friends), to accept their penance and receive absolution not only from Congressional investigators but from every group of "fact-finders" whose lists might fall in the hands of a producer.

Some, however, held out. When asked to answer inquiries about their past or present relationship with the Communist Party, they fell back on the Fifth Amendment. This meant that they were no longer employable in the motion-picture industry.

The original group of recalcitrant witnesses, the Hollywood Ten, as they were called, did not invoke the Fifth Amendment. With solid support from the industry, they argued, back in 1947, that no investigating committee had the right to inquire into their political beliefs and affiliations; invoking the First Amendment, they refused flatly to cooperate with the House Committee on Un-American Activities. In due time they were cited for contempt of Congress, found guilty and sentenced to prison.

Among them was a man named Dalton Trumbo. Trumbo, once a well-known screenwriter, had been almost forgotten when the "Robert Rich" case broke. The Motion Picture Academy awarded an Oscar to Robert Rich for the screenplay of "The Brave One." But who was Robert Rich? His award was never claimed and rumors began to circulate that Rich was a name used by one of the Hollywood Ten, who had written the movie on a black-market basis. Specifically, there were rumors that Robert Rich was none other than Dalton Trumbo. This was flatly denied by all but Trumbo.

The producers of "The Brave One" told reporters that Robert Rich was a bearded young man who had arrived mysteriously in Hollywood, written the prize-winning script, and then just as mysteriously had disappeared. They believed that he had gone to Spain, and

there were solemn statements issued from Hollywood that heroic efforts were being made to find him there.

In the meantime, Trumbo played a cat-and-mouse game with reporters who asked him about it. He would not say he was and he would not say he was not Robert Rich. He admitted that he had done black-market writing for the films while he was officially excommunicated from the studios. He even admitted that he had won not less than one but not more than four Academy nominations under pseudonyms.

It is time for another Academy Award convocation, and it seems likely to many knowledgeable critics that this year's prize will go to "The Defiant Ones." Two authors received credit for this film. One of them, Nedrick Young, now known as Nathan E. Douglas, took the Fifth in 1953. The Academy has been forbidden by its own ruling during recent years to confer the prized Oscar on anyone who falls into this category. The Academy, then, faced with the possible embarrassment of having to deny the prize to one of the two writers, and remembering the Robert Rich case, recently decided to break out of its own prison; it voted to change the ruling. Henceforth, it was ruled, anyone who writes or acts in a prize-winning film may receive the prize. After all, spokesmen for the Academy announced, as if it were a daring new concept in esthetics, the Academy judges not the man but his work.

After this announcement, Dalton Trumbo decided to come clean—and to claim the Oscar he won for "The Brave One." He announced that he was indeed "Robert Rich" and that his identity was known to the producers all the time. He was too polite to say so, but his admission, and its subsequent corroboration, showed that there never had been a mysterious bearded man, as had been falsely claimed when the story first broke. If safaris had been sent off to Spain to find such a man, they went on a wild goose chase.

Somewhere in this tissue of lies and deceit there is a moral, but it seems hardly necessary to point it out. One thing however seems certain and that is that some of the powers-that-be in Hollywood applied their much-touted screening process (or blacklist) cynically. Moreover, they did not hesitate to invent tall stories in order to serve the public-relations demand of a spectacular patriotic crusade that was largely fraudulent. The public, in this whole affair, was treated with contempt. Ritualistic anti-Communism was conceived of as a public-relations device, and as usual the real object of worship was the Almighty Dollar. It was perhaps not without its psychological significance that Trumbo chose the *nom de plume* he used for "The Brave One."

JOHN COGLEY.

*His poems do not synthesize,
but maintain distinct points of view*

The Voices of Robert Frost

by ROSEMARY F. DEEN

IT HAS BEEN almost half a century since Robert Frost's first book was published, and he is now the oldest and most honored American poet. After all these years and honors gathered, what perspective do we have on Frost? What is his character as a poet? This ought to be an easier question to answer than it is. In fact, Frost's handsome reputation, the extensive anthologizing of his poems, and the availability they have all make it a little harder to see what kind of poet Frost is.

Many different images of Frost exist. In England he was first welcomed as a poet who had created new effects in poetry by relying on the qualities of spoken language. As he became popular in America, the image of what Randall Jarrell calls "The Official Robert Frost" took shape: a New England American, writing undeniably good poetry full of wit and wisdom that we can all understand. Satisfaction with Frost, in other words, was not all repose. It was armed with shafts directed at other poets who were either "un-American" (expatriates) or obscure or both. The deplorable skirmish that went on in print in the late thirties and early forties found Frost's critics calling him smug, reactionary, and irresponsible; while Frost's friends called their enemies radicals, social planners, marxists, obscurantists, or simply, with menacing understatement, *avant garde*.

And Frost, of course, provokes this sort of thing. He is an unexpected combination of quietism and cantankerousness. He never replies or argues. He speaks of that "perfect detachment from ambition and desire that can alone rescue us from the round of existence." He speaks in understatement. But Richard Church once shrewdly observed that Frost's understatement is a means of exerting authority. For this reason his refusal to contend is often as irritating as contentiousness itself. Frost relishes the role of Devil's Advocate. He is a kind of moral copperhead as his father was a political copperhead—a man from a family five generations in New England who named his son Robert Lee. Frost's public utterances are always spiced with "shockers" that never fail to irritate someone. His poetry has its

more serious "shockers," which treat abhorred notions like vengeance and destructiveness with a detachment amounting to acceptance.

Frost's admirers have done his poetry more disservice than his detractors. The worst of them were well described by Robert Lowell as "a whole dunciad of babbling innocence." Even the best of them neglect his poetry to write about Frost the wise man. They are alike in quoting more from Frost's conversation than from his poetry and in taking the two forms of discourse as equivalent. Mr. Reginald L. Cook, in the latest volume to appear on Frost: (*The Dimensions of Robert Frost*, Rinehart, \$3.95.) discusses the poetry by means of elaborate categories. But he too is overwhelmed by the personality of his friend. His image of Frost's benevolence (that famous "twinkle in his eye" is blinding) causes him seriously to misread such poems as "Design" and "Two Witches."

The root of the problem of Frost's reputation is that he is known too much at second hand—through his anthologized poems, rather than by the whole body of his work. Anthologies are excellent means for getting at a minor poet. But sampling distorts the major poet in a serious way. His range cannot be sensed by means of a judicious selection. Moreover, in the complete work, meaning accumulates until a structure emerges, beyond individual poems, in which even the bad poems have their place.

SOME CRITICS, of course, have termed Frost minor, lacking in "intensity" and "engagement." He is compared with Eliot and Yeats and found flat and voiceless. The mistake here, I think, is in treating Frost as a lyric poet. He is essentially a dramatic poet even in his short poems. Frost himself tells us what his models are: "I first heard the voice from a printed page in a Virgilian eclogue and from 'Hamlet.'" The debts to "Hamlet" are apparent in the dramatic monologues, even to the recurring themes of madness, ghosts, and murder. It is the quality of "voice" and the implied character in voice that makes Frost's short poems dramatic.

Frost's analysis of this method (in a letter to Sidney Cox) shows how deliberate these effects are: "The

Miss Deen, a regular reviewer for this magazine, is doing advanced work at the University of Chicago.

living part of a poem is the intonation entangled somehow in the syntax, idiom and meaning of a sentence. . . . It goes and the language becomes dead language, the poetry dead poetry. With it go the accents, the stresses, the delays that are not the property of vowels and syllables. . . . ”

Frost declared his intention to show “by examples that a sentence as a sound in itself apart from the word sounds is no mere figure of speech. I shall show the sentence sound saying all the sentence conveys with little or no help from the meaning of the words. I shall show the sentence sound opposing the sense of the words, as in irony.”

The drama in the tone of voice arises out of what is dramatic in Frost’s attitude. “All truth is dialogue,” Frost once remarked. Not dialectic, it should be noted, with its implications of opposites synthesized into one; but two voices, remaining distinct. This is why Frost’s voice in the poems never speaks in the impassioned statement of the lyric with its power of rhetoric. The reader is always at a distance. He overhears the voice and can imagine another voice in reply. This acute sense of the “other” is proper to dramatic talent. What life wants, Frost says in “The Most of It,” “Is not its own love back in copy speech,/ But counter-love, original response.”

Frost’s attitudes as a dramatic poet emerge as themes in his poetry. He sees two kinds of life, but the values assigned to them constantly shift, making them vary in their relationship. Reason is often represented as order, law, sanity. It takes backward steps to gain a point of vantage. But it may also limit and constrict life. Its retreats are sometimes allied with fear (“scare” is a word that recurs almost obsessively in the poems). Opposed to reason is impulse, the delight in life and the source of love and courage. But it may lead to disorder, madness, and waste. It may care too much (“care” is another important, recurrent word). Neither direction can emerge as the *right* way of life. The truth is the dialogue itself. The drama is in the conflict between the two.

IN THE POEM called “The Code,” a hired man who resents the bullying of his master “goes about to kill him fair enough.” It was a wrong *word* of the master’s that made the code operative, and the master himself is made to approve the hired man’s action: “He knew I did just right!” As it is in many of Frost’s poems the irony here is compound. First there is dramatic irony: the actor considers his action right; the reader replies within himself that it is wrong. The reader is in a dialogue with the actor. But there is a third voice, that of the poet-narrator. The reader slowly realizes that this narrator finds the action “neither wrong nor right.”

The two poems grouped under the title of “Two

Witches,” though almost never discussed in print, are major works. Both show how impulse destroys. In each poem an old woman tells the story of a “great” time in her past, though the reader is made to see it as a tragically destructive time. The “wildness” of each woman manifests itself sexually. The shorter of the poems, “The Pauper Witch of Grafton,” is a kind of ironic version of the story of Susannah and the Elders and we must go back to the Renaissance for any comparable sense of the wrongness to which life can be turned: “I loved this woman,” says a character in “The Changeling,” “in spite of her heart.”

In “The Witch of Coös,” Frost’s greatest poem, the woman tells of a night when she imagined that the bones of her lover, whom her husband had killed, walked out of the cellar where they were buried and up into the attic. Only that event is narrated, and nothing is told directly of the events before and after. The poem is like *Oedipus* in its concentration of dramatic ironies. We know, for example, all we need to of the failure of the marriage:

The only fault my husband found with me—
I went to sleep before I went to bed,
Especially in winter when the bed
Might just as well be ice and the clothes snow.

The irony here, as Frost says, is a matter of the sentence intonation opposing the sense of the words. In the same way we see that the love affair was destructive, but have a sense that it was a time of happiness and release.

Her hallucination is an attempt to save herself from the unbearable pressures of her contradictory feelings. She is overwhelmed by guilt toward both husband and lover. In one sense, she never gives the lover up. But she wants him out of the “cellar,” where he is undermining her, and into the “attic,” where his existence can be rationalized. The conflicts in her attitude are shown in one way by her uncertainty of what pronoun to use for reference to the dead man. She speaks of *him* (the man), of *it* (a spirit), and most fearfully, of *them* (the bones). Once “in the attic,” they are sealed up again. The door is nailed and the headboard of the bed is pushed against it. But “they” are restless and they sometimes

Come down the stairs at night and stand perplexed
Behind the door and headboard of the bed,
Brushing their chalky skull with chalky fingers.

All that wildness is gentled, perplexed. And the “witch” too is perplexed. Time and emptiness of life have made her wonder why she ever cared. Still, at the end, she looks for the fingerbone she said she struck off when the bones came toward her. It may be in her button box, she says, though she can’t find it there. The wildness is not easy to tame, as she perhaps suggested earlier when she spoke of the attitude of outsiders toward her trade as a medium:

Summoning spirits isn't 'Button, button,
Who's got the button,' I would have them know.

THOUGH FROST is well known as a conservative, his sympathy with "wildness" is apparent in the dramatic monologues and in the short poems about wild flowers and brooks. He has written a *Masque of Mercy*, as well as a *Masque of Reason*. He writes most about what is fragile, vanished, or lowly:

Late in life I have come on fern.

Now lichens are due to have their turn.

Essentially what he prizes is what the imagination sees and what would otherwise remain unnoticed.

In the imagination, reason and impulse are reconciled, because the poem begins, as Frost describes it, in the impulse of delight and does not know its end or direction. But out of what Frost calls its "wildness" an order is discovered so that the poem can be fulfilled. Many of Frost's poems use "discovery" as their structure. The narrator is on a walk, free of purpose, but ends in finding something. In the best of these poems the discovery is muted—ambiguous or ironic. The walker, often enough, sees waste, decay, and "emptiness flayed to the very stone." In "The Most of It" the reply to the cry for "counter-love, original response" is a great buck pushing through the water.

In the real unexpectedness of the discovery we can see the usefulness to Frost of what many poets have liked to think of as their association with Satan. In his poems, personal willfulness becomes elemental; counter-impulse. In "The Axe-Helve," which proposes to be a poem about knowledge, the dangerousness of knowledge is everywhere implied. By the end, the narrator sees the good helve (whose "crookedness" is "native to the grain before the knife expressed it") as its maker balances it upright:

Erect, but not without its waves, as when

The snake stood up for evil in the Garden.

Frost's sympathies are with impulse; his control is the detachment of reason that knows dangerous things. In the sonnet "Acquainted With the Night," Frost speaks most clearly in his detached, "third voice." He walks at night through the rain beyond the houses and lights of the city—whatever of reason and custom they stand for. He walks past an emblem of law, the "watchman," to whom he is "unwilling to explain." At the end of the walk

One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.

Such an attitude makes it impossible for Frost to offer long poems of the scope of Milton's or Wordsworth's. But his whole work is not therefore a collection of shards. It has coherence, depth, wit, flexibility, and a unique life. It speaks with an original voice a common language kept fertile, but controlled so that it can sustain the dialogue of life.

THE SCREEN

WATCH ON THE GANGES

THIS IS a week for films that both oldsters and youngsters will like. From India has come "Aparajito" ("The Unvanquished"), a sequel to last year's successful "Pather Panchali," which started the story of a father and mother and their two young children and ended after the death of the daughter with the family leaving the hinterlands and moving to the city. The new film doesn't have quite the same cinematic poetry or childhood wonders of the first one, but it does have a more interesting story; I found myself fascinated as the family adjusts to city life in Benares in 1920, where the father is a lay priest and reader, as the mother settles into her unfamiliar home, and as Apu, the young son, roams the streets, allowing the camera and us to take in the sights in the narrow passageways between the buildings as well as the crowds of people in and along the Ganges.

At times Director Satyajit Ray lets his film move too slowly and dwell too fondly, as does Apu, on the strangeness of it all; and occasionally, either through bad editing or omissions in the plot, we are not entirely sure where we are or why. But when it comes to handling his actors, Ray knows exactly what he's doing and he does it well. After the death of the father, the mother and son move to the country and an even stronger bond grows up between them. Apu insists that he be sent to school, and he becomes such a good student that he wins a scholarship to the university in Calcutta. What will no doubt interest American audiences most about Apu's student days is the portrait of Indian college life and the young man's outgrowing his mother and his past. In fact, "Aparajito" (like "Pather Panchali") should attract moviegoers everywhere who enjoy seeing other people in other climes bound by themes that are universal. Man is man the world over—but the film has English sub-titles for Americans who cannot speak Indian or even pronounce the name of the author on whose novel Satyajit Ray based his script: Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhyaya.

WALT DISNEY'S new film, "Sleeping Beauty," needs no sub-titles. It is a feature-length cartoon full of the usual Disney magic, plus some new-fangled star dust to give it an extra fairy-tale quality and account for the six-million-dollar expenditure in lush Technicolor, wide-screen Technirama 70 and full stereophonic sound. Using the music from Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty Ballet" and the Charles Perrault version of the famous tale (with variations), Disney's artists have put together a charming cartoon about the Princess Aurora, who was destined by the evil fairy,

Maleficent, to prick her finger on her sixteenth birthday and die. But she was also blessed by her three fairy Godmothers with the gifts of beauty and song—and happiness which turned that prophecy of death into a sleep from which she would be awakened by the kiss of true love. Although the characters in “Sleeping Beauty” resemble those in “Snow White,” they move with a more natural grace, and Aurora herself has a modern touch that is enhanced by the fine singing and speaking voice of Mary Costa. Philip, the prince who fights the wicked Maleficent and wakens Aurora with a kiss, is more masculine than most of the cartoon heroes and yet has all the charm of Rock Hunter. But the characters who steal the show in the new Disney opus are the three Godmothers: pleasingly plump fuss-budgets who are more motherly than fairy and are guaranteed to bring back to good humor the young audiences who may be frightened by the ghouls.

MUSIC LOVERS who object to a pictorial interpretation of music won't be happy about the fine Disney nature short that is being shown with “Sleeping Beauty,” but everyone else will find “Grand Canyon” as something definitely to be seen—and heard. It has no dialogue or narration; accompanying the magnificent shots of the Painted Desert, the Monument Valley, the Colorado River and all the other splendors of this region is Ferde Grofé's “Grand Canyon Suite,” beautifully performed under Conductor Frederick Stark. Opening with Dali-esque shots of craggy shadows on plateaus, the film moves on to other impressive views of the canyon, with time out for fascinating color photography of clouds and changing seasons and animals in action. The final shots are stunning, as they move dramatically from close-ups of an eagle to views of it in flight and then to panoramas of the whole mountain range, giving the viewer the sensation of flying with the eagle into the sunset.

AUDIENCES who want a little adventure without flying should find “Up Periscope” to their liking. It will take them on an exciting wartime trip in a submarine commanded by Edmond O'Brien, who resents having to deliver a passenger to a Japanese-held island instead of fighting. But O'Brien, being a good officer, does his job well; and after a series of thrills provided by the attacking enemy, he gets his man, who's on a secret mission, to Kusaie. James Garner, an easy-going and likable young actor best known as T.V.'s “Maverick,” effectively plays the lieutenant with the dangerous assignment. And Director Gordon Douglas manages to give his whole picture some realism along with the derring-do. “Up Periscope” is by no means a great war picture, but in spite of its Hollywood clichés, it has its suspenseful moments and absorbing situations.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

OF NOTE

ART IN CHURCH

IN THE CURRENT issue of *Liturgical Arts* (7 East 42nd St., New York 17, N.Y.; quarterly, \$5 a year), artist Jean Charlot writes about “Catholic Art in America: Debits and Credits.” An excerpt from that article follows.

The sights that assail the eye of the American faithful every church-going day rarely illustrate a sane concept of the liturgical arts. Taken at its face value, this daily visual experience would indicate that church art is, for unstated reasons, a doubly debased imitation of past forms of art, shaped indeed in abhorrence of its intended function. Average church art is debased because no contemporary could hope to breathe life into art forms whose once cogent reasons for being are long dead and gone; it is doubly debased because these archaeological fakes are not even given to us first hand, turned out as they are by the thousand as heartlessly and irreverently as video sets or toasters.

Differing from this widespread practice is the correct concept of what the sacred arts should be. Leaving for the moment feeling and theology aside, let us tackle function. In the 1920's the French architect Le Corbusier crisply stated that a house is a *machine to live in*; thus implying that all of it, from floor to crockery, must be shaped, textured, and inter-related to meet living requirements as exactly as the cogs of a watch conform to their purpose of marking time. Though a church is a more mysterious unit than is a house, it may be described along functional lines: from God's point of view a church is a *machine to live in*, and from man's point of view, a *machine to pray in*. Function is more than implicit in the many practical rulings of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Its laws are more factual than esthetic. They specify practical requirements for a whole gamut of objects, from the plan of a nave to the matter, texture, and shape of a single paten. To start thus at the functional level of the liturgical problem is one sure way to push away the scruples, actually only skin-deep, that artificially and perennially arise about matters of style.

The business of the living church is with the living. To answer its function, a church building should achieve between today's American parishioner and its architecture, its statues and pictures, a moving affinity not unlike the one that, in Europe, existed for centuries between the faithful and their material church, be it a cathedral or a crossroads chapel. The point is not at all that America should compete with Chartres on its own terms, but rather that our churches should fit the requirements of New World Catholics as successfully

as Chartres answered the needs of its own people in a very different time and place.

In the Old World, the battle against ecclesiastical gothic can be fought on the grounds of fitness in time; its battle cry is: *to each period its style!* But Europe is the birthplace of cathedrals. Still in use, they blend today, as they did yesterday, into a willing landscape.

In America—in these United States—gothic architecture constitutes a boast flaunted in the face of reason, as insane as importing a haunted Scotch castle. On this continent we have good European medieval works, such as those displayed in the Museum of the Cloisters of New York. Once they have crossed the Atlantic, they become mere beautiful curios, as extinct as stuffed dodos in a museum of natural history. Copies, of course, are worse. Even if we could afford more American cathedrals, far outdoing their European models in size, and many more replicas of Bruges belfreys (equipped with pushbutton carillons), the problem of fitness would by no means be solved by such excessively costly esthetic sins.

Does modern art offer a better solution? Yes, if by modern art we mean an art created by contemporaries, like ourselves soothed and buffeted by the times we live in—works whose style will reflect our common experience. Today's artists wear neither knight's armor nor musketeer's cape, and genuine artists see no reason for creating an art of fancy dress.

The excellence of this simple formula—that we have no choice but to be of our own time—should also be applied to geography—to a conformity with the place we live in. Within the relative cohesion of our Western culture, there exist local nuances that the religious artist has no more right to bypass than he has to deny the larger problems raised by the kind of church art that will best fit Asia or Africa. An indiscriminate importation of up-to-date art formulas is but a doubtful panacea for what ails our American liturgical arts. As stated, building fourteenth-century churches in the twentieth century is totally illogical. Nor can one sincerely long for the day when a so-called international style will lay a rash of identical, slab-like architecture on our ever-varied American landscape. . . .

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The history of Western art was long synonymous with that of the Church. The Church was the most active patron of artists, and all flocked naturally to her. Time was when a pope, picking an adolescent out of a crowd of applicants, found his reward in a Sistine Chapel or Raphael's Stanzas. Today, the link between artists and Church that in the past worked wonders seems severed. The Church today is an uncertain patron, fallen from its great estate as appreciator of untried styles; the Church is also an irascible patron, quick to suspect the new, its memory of the art revolutions that it once consistently helped, lost. The artist is still at work, painting ways of the cross and flights into Egypt, only to put them eventually in storage; carving statues worthy of God's house, only to leave them behind to avoid freight charges on moving day. The cleric now shops for church art not where he would naturally find it, in the artist's studio, but more conveniently in the rectory, from a mail-order catalogue. What esthetic junk he buys as a result will visually foul his church, debase the piety of his parishioners into pietistic routines, and be seized upon by the gleeful unbeliever as another proof that the Church is indeed in its decadence.

There are of course exceptions. At times, the artist waiting at the Church gates in sackcloth and ashes is bidden to enter, and the plastic cacophony one has come to expect as accompaniment to divine service is wonderfully replaced by visual music. Every time this happens, impatient well-wishers acclaim a renaissance! After thirty years of meditating on the shortcomings of the liturgical arts, and of laboring to narrow the gap between sane theory and insane practice, I feel most cautious in claiming such a clear-cut victory, or in conceding defeat either. Defeat there is of a sort in being an absolute minority when one's aims are altogether catholic. There is a defeat of a sort in producing objects—paintings or statues—that may never reach their rightful place inside a religious building, never edify, as is their birthright, praying crowds. The victory, as I see it, is of a more metaphysical nature: the vocation of the creative liturgical artist has become so fiercely impractical today that it must be more than ever a tried way, if a trying one, of serving God.

AN APPEAL

The director of a new hospital in the diocese of Mangalore, India, seeks funds for surgical instruments and other medical supplies. There are medical, surgical and maternity wards and an out-patient department. The hospital serves men and women of all castes and creeds and is thronged by the destitute. Donations may be sent directly to: Very Rev. Msgr. R. D. Sequeira, Goretti Hospital, Kallianpur Post, S. Kanara, India. (Airmail 25¢.)

COMMUNICATIONS

DE GAULLE AND FRANCE

New York, N.Y.

TO THE EDITORS: In an article in the Sept. 19th issue entitled "Hour of Decision," Robert Barrat discussed the referendum on the Gaullist Constitution which was then a few days away. In the Jan. 9th issue he wrote another article, a follow-up of the former. It might be instructive to study for a moment the picture, from September to January, not of the actual situation, but of the commentator, M. Barrat himself.

Let us divide this brief study into three parts: M. Barrat on the General, on Algeria, and on the chances of democracy in France.

1. In September, M. Barrat deplored that de Gaulle, after three months of plenary powers behind him, "has not succeeded in exacting obedience from [the colonels of] Algiers." He did not hesitate, however, to accuse this apparently weak figure of "Bonapartism and Caesarism," and the projected Constitution of a dictatorial design.

But while in September de Gaulle loomed large as a new *Caesar* (and, at the same time, a *puppet* in the hands of the Algerian rebels), by January he has become an "opportunist" too, blowing hot and cold about friendship with Germany (he denounced the European Defense Community, but seeks agreement with Adenauer!), the Common Market, and the A-bomb. What M. Barrat would, no doubt, have called a "consummate skill of adjusting to new situations" if displayed by a Radical or a Socialist politician of the Fourth Republic, he labels, when referring to the General, "an indecisive approach, reflecting more the political situation of the moment than any firmly held design."

Why does Robert Barrat call de Gaulle an opportunist? Because he wants to imply that the General's quick and determined step ordering the military out of the Committees of Public Safety and Salan from Algiers is, in reality, a sham measure, intending to camouflage his weakness and indecision. "What guarantee is there," asks M. Barrat (in January!), "that if de Gaulle comes up against determined resistance on the part of the powerful French ultras and the Army in Algeria, he will not jettison his plan for a liberal solution of the Algerian problem?"

2. M. Barrat knows very well, of course, what the guarantee is that de Gaulle will not yield to the ultras (after having ordered the Army out of politics). It would, therefore, be vain to remind him of the General's Constantine speech about the social and economic development of Algeria, his dispatch of M. Delouvrier to carry it out, and the latter's friendly reception by the

Algerian population; M. Barrat would believe less his eyes than his ideology.

M. Barrat seems also to be less interested in M. Delouvrier's task than in full satisfaction given to the F.L.N. In September, M. Barrat was full of anguish regarding "the men of the left, the intellectuals and the members of the clergy, who favor negotiations with Algeria" and who will be persecuted by those in power for "being accomplices of the 'enemies of France'" (Barrat's quotation marks). In January, however, he had to admit the "regrettable" fact that "the Algerian nationalists did not accept the opportunity de Gaulle offered them at his October 23 press conference." The General does not come off without a rebuke, though: he is scolded for "certain unfortunate expressions, such as his allusion to the white flag, symbol of surrender."

3. And finally, the chances of democracy in France. One wonders why M. Barrat speaks of a "dangerous decline in the French sense of civic responsibility" (January) precisely at a time when the people, through the known instruments of democracy (M. Barrat calls democracy in a somewhat derogatory manner "*vox populi*" when his favorite politicians are defeated), decided that the Fourth Republic, from 1947 to 1958, had been unable to perform its own legislative and governmental responsibilities, and that therefore it should go? Did he not write in September that the stability de Gaulle seeks now, the Leftist parties ought to have found long ago? Did he not write that "the Left has always been distrustful of a strong executive," and that this was its greatest fault in the matter, since "an executive can function effectively only if he is assured of a certain security in office and protected from the harassment of irresponsible politicians"? Let me ask him: would the much-needed stability have been possible with the old National Assembly and its hundred-and-fifty Communists? Is it not worth at least trying to achieve that goal, after the "pendulum has swung," with 180 deputies of the U.N.R. and 132 Independents?

But if the largely favorable evolution of events from September to January made no impression on M. Barrat, what *can* convince him and his fellows who travel along the *Express* line?

THOMAS MOLNAR.

"RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE"

Stanford, Calif.

TO THE EDITORS: Monsignor Lally, in his article "Religion and Public Life" [Dec. 19], raises problems which bear serious thinking. For it is indeed true that morality has been introduced into the discussion of this country's policies. And without a clear idea of the extent, including the limits, of the moral standard which should be applied in judging a particu-

lar policy, this country's leaders could bring us to unnecessary disaster.

In the first place, there is no such thing as a national morality: no people will be damned or saved because of its nation's policies. Furthermore, a nation has no conscience which could guide it, and this is nowhere more clear than in the United States, where we have a spectrum of belief running from religious fanatics, through the indifferent, to the anti-religious. And lastly, it is often impossible to get enough facts about a situation to form a right conscience. Were the Germans "wrong" in World War I? Historians still argue. But the leaders of the time had to act.

However, there is, it seems to me, a public morality which must be integrated into the conscience of every public official when he takes office; but it is no more than that he will use his best efforts to protect, preserve and defend the United States of America and its laws. Thus, when faced with the decision of whether to support Chiang and Quemoy; whether to favor one faction or another in the Middle East; whether to continue nuclear testing, the only issue before the man who will make the decision is, "Which course will best promote the continued safety of the United States?" Only if he uses his best efforts to find the right answer to that question and is true to the answer reached can he go to bed with a clear conscience.

If he attempts to guide himself by gazing into the opaque ball of the moral views of the American people (or of the even more nebulous world opinion) he is derelict in his duty to the minority and untrue to the principle of representative government. A sad example of this method of conducting a nation's affairs is found in the history of our relations with Spain after World War II. The newspaper-created public opinion was conceived to be anti-Franco. He was a "fascist," a "dictator." So we refused to give any aid to Spain in those hungry post-war years. I believe it was the hope of some that our policy would starve the Spanish into revolting. As we now know, they preferred Franco to another blood-letting, so they pulled in their belts. Fortunately, our selfish need for foreign bases intervened, and now Spain has begun to recover. (Perhaps, this is somewhat overdrawn, but its general truth was attested to by Dean Acheson before a congressional inquiry into our relations with Spain around 1950).

Equally as bad as following "public opinion" would be for an official to give any weight to his own moral judgment of the right or wrong of a course of action, lacking the public morality standard set out above. Then we could be at the mercy of a decision as to Formosa, for example, based not on whether it was a necessary link in a Pacific perimeter of offense or defense, but rather on whether the official found Red China's present dictatorship more evil than the memory of Chiang's past dictatorship.

All of this may seem to be selfish nationalism. But nationalism is essentially selfish. That does not make it reprehensible. Christianity is selfish, too, in that it tells a man his first duty is to save *his own* soul. But in fulfilling this duty he will always find it in his best interest to give a hand to his neighbor.

VINCENT E. WHALEN.

REPLY

Boston, Mass.

TO THE EDITORS: Mr. Whalen speaks well when he suggests that these questions demand serious thinking. They also require clear thinking.

What Mr. Whalen describes as "public morality" is indeed a form of "selfish nationalism," to use his own phrase. It would be a grave distortion of Catholic social teaching, as exemplified in the statements of the last five pontiffs, to suppose that public officials discharge their total moral responsibility while limiting their solicitude and concern to the promotion of a purely national order. The very obligations of the individual state require collaboration in the organization and functioning of an international society. A national patriotism, to be sure, is still a necessity, but of itself it is not enough. The claim of the universal human society is a larger good which must be both sought and preferred.

Moreover, we must remember that every public official remains a human person whatever may be his office, and his actions still must be judged by moral standards. Mr. Whalen supposes that public acts are free from all moral restrictions. While many, perhaps most, public acts are without moral significance some surely are bound to be moral acts; in these a man may not act against his conscience.

Finally, it is true that each one has a duty to save his soul, but it is a grotesque perversion of Christian doctrine to suggest that "love of neighbor" is merely a matter of self interest when it is in fact rooted in the very love of God Himself.

(Very Rev.) FRANCIS J. LALLY.

"FEDERAL AID"

Kitchener, Ontario

TO THE EDITORS: In bold type begins Francis Griffith's bold statement ["Federal Aid to Education," Jan. 30]: "The United States is the only country in the world in which education is not under central control. . . ."

I consider the editors who let this pass no less guilty than your school-principal author of an ignorance of neighbor which could nowhere else today be so typical or so impenetrable as in the United States.

RONALD HAGLER.

Celebration of an Author's Doom

THE UNSPEAKABLE SKIPTON. By Pamela Hansford Johnson. Harcourt. \$3.95.

By THOMAS F. CURLEY

DANIEL SKIPTON, Knight of the Most Noble Order of SS. Cyril and Methodius, is unspeakable only in England; in Bruges, moreover, where he resides amid the tolling of the bells, that term is certainly a misnomer. Skipton is well worth talking about; he is, indeed, almost a saint of art, failing only in that infallible mark of all sanctity—success.

By his own judgment, with which one or two Americans might agree, Skipton is not only a great novelist; he has, in fact, completed the first draft of the greatest novel in the English language. When we meet him, in the early years of this decade, he has spent close to a year in bringing that first draft to perfection—in black, red and green ink. Thanks, however, to the penurious thrift of the “cur” Utterson, his publisher, Skipton must live by his wits. And so it is that we meet the man as well as the artist. As a man, Skipton is a swindler, a pimp, a snob, a parasite: in a word, and with no great strain on the metaphor, a louse. Apart from his art, however, Skipton's only pleasures in life are his fits of rage and infrequent, because expensive, enjoyment of crude sex shows. And yet one cannot help liking the man. Miss Hansford Johnson makes one

like him. How? By the company he keeps.

To digress very briefly. While reading *The Unspeakable Skipton*, I happened also to read George Orwell's, *The Road to Wigan Pier* in which I came across a provocative passage which I quote only in part: “The modern English literary world, at any rate the highbrow section of it, is a sort of poisonous jungle where only weeds can flourish. . . . In the highbrow world you ‘get on’ . . . not so much by your literary ability as by being the life and soul of literary cocktail parties and kissing the bums of verminous little lions.”

Now I know nothing of the English literary world but if the English tourists in Bruges, whom Skipton, in relative innocence, attempts to use for purposes of survival, are at all representative, then Miss Hansford Johnson has convinced me that Orwell's judgment was mild. Two of these tourists, Dorothy Merlin, a poetess of the womb, and her husband, Cosmo Hines, a bookseller by trade, are triumphs of characterization. Of Dorothy, in particular, one is forced to say, “I believe because she is impossible.” And to top it all off, the author brings in a poor-rich Italian singer with a title who is no slouch himself when it comes to a “con” game.

With such a crew, Miss Hansford Johnson proceeds to the celebration of Daniel Skipton's doom. That is what the novel is about. From the very beginning, from the time Skipton hears and sees, through his pocket mirror, Dorothy Merlin say of him, “*Why* is that man like a carrion crow,” you know Skipton is lost. Not that you care. Insufferable in victory, magnificently spiteful and enraged in defeat, Skipton on his death bed conquers, but only esthetically, his gross tormentors.

It's amazing how well all this is brought off. At first reading, I put the book down as a better than competent but not a great work.

Late For the Pater Noster

Lord, do I wrong
To pair in my commemoration
for the dead
Two,
Who on my side of purgatory
Rankled at the prospect of
each encounter,
Even on Yours?

—And Lord, do they still?

Helmut J. Golatz.



*From the Hermits
of the Desert
to St. Ignatius Loyola...*

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By WALTER NIGG

This richly informative, fascinatingly readable book tells the stories of the men and women (all subsequently sainted) who founded the great monastic and other religious orders of Christianity. It relates what is known of each founder's life and then examines the order's ruling ideas, characteristics, conflicts, tragedies, and services. The position of the order today is always described.

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It is not great but it is so very accomplished that any comparison with the competent is an injustice.

Skipton is presented as unspeakable but we are persuaded, though never told, to like him. And yet never once, no, not for a sentence, does the author entice our sentiments or our emotions. You could not care less what happens to Skipton or the rest but you thoroughly enjoy reading about him and them. Now that is an achievement worthy of unqualified praise and admiration. I don't know of an American who is capable of it.

As for engaging the affections, well that is something, as Miss Hansford Johnson no doubt knows, that is beyond the reaches of art. At least it should be.

Man and Writer

GIBBON AND ROME, By E. J. Oliver. Sheed and Ward. \$3.50.

By GARRY WILLS

GIBBON LIVED in two periods of history, preserving as vital contact with the Roman Empire as with England of his own day. The author of *Gibbon and Rome* approaches his subject from both periods by means of a comparative study of the History and the Autobiography, only to discover that Gibbon has somehow eluded this pincer movement. Oliver's conclusion is that Gibbon existed above both times, achieving the ideal detachment of an historian.

This is a mysterious assertion, yet Mr. Oliver merely states and repeats the terms of the mystery. The great historian was not firmly anchored in history, and seems, almost, not to have had a personal development in time. This seems the more extraordinary when we remember how impatient Gibbon was with metaphysics and philosophy.

To this mystery Mr. Oliver does, however suggest an answer which is not his own. He uses eighteenth-century architecture as an analogue to *The Decline and Fall*, and, with-

out claiming to, judges Gibbon's work throughout as *art*. His comments on "history" are taken from the aesthetic rather than the scientific vocabulary. Gibbon is, in fact, an early example of the artist who tries to "live only in his art," to replace his own reality in unsatisfactory surroundings with a world he can himself "create" and control. This is the source of his history's greatness and vision—its saturation in the Roman mentality; its patient exploration of fact; its style, echoing the Latin majesty; the sense it conveys of dramatic involvement in the struggle of Civilization with outer Night.

But what the artifact gained, the artist often lost. While sitting in the governing body of England, he participated in none of its discussions or judgments. His mind was full of the Senate's problems, not Parliament's; and he admits that he feared the loss of reputation that might follow on comments made outside his established area. He protected himself, in a similar manner, against all intrusions into his own little "Rome." His famed irony on the subjects of religion, love, metaphysics, mysticism, and patriotism was a defense against those things which put a man at the mercy of something greater than himself. This is the reason Mr. Oliver cannot root him in any real time. Like the painter in Poe's story, Gibbon demonstrates that one can destroy life by "capturing" it on canvas.

Contrary, therefore, to Mr. Oliver's thesis—that Gibbon wrote history well because of his detachment—we find that he wrote well because he had displaced his own center of existence and begun to live in his work. He felt, obscurely figured in Rome's history of decline, the process whereby his own civilized calm was assailed by the "ruder" forms of life. The remarkable thing is that he felt and revealed this pattern in the series of Roman events without distorting their factual sequence. This suggests some interesting reflections on the modern ideal of "detachment" in the writing of history. Human "facts" cannot be coldly sifted like

those of the laboratory; they must be *lived through* in one way or another.

Mr. Oliver uses a very interesting method, one which takes as its object not Gibbon's life nor his work, but only the point of contact and fusion between the two. It is unfortunate that he does not explore the problems this method suggests: the relation of Gibbon's personal struggle to Rome's; the sense in which history is a science, and the extent to which it must be a humanistic discipline; "the separation of art and life"—a constant theme in the life of modern poets and painters—as it is anticipated and illumined in the case of an eighteenth-century historian. Here, surely, is the most interesting example of an historian at work, illustrating all the danger and nobility of this mysterious occupation.

The author's idea of comparing a man's account of himself with his account of others was not, strictly speaking, an original discovery of method. It has been shown, for example, that the same moral struggle treated in Augustine's *Confessions* is projected, on a macrocosmic scale, in *The City of God*. But instead of searching for the underlying movement of Gibbon's History as an analogue of the Autobiography, Oliver has done little more than chronicle verbal parallels and remarks on similar topics. The book is disappointing precisely because its theme and method promised more than this.

Adult Fables

ACROSS PARIS AND OTHER STORIES. By Marcel Aymé. Trans. by Norman Denny. Harper. \$3.50.

By WILLIAM DUNLEA

THE NOVELS of Marcel Aymé are all things to all readers, and the same may be said of his stories; they are adult fables, fantasies, fairytales, and seldom short. Superficially they are intellectual gags, the quintessence of his farcical expertise; but this is more

than expertise playing at art, and like the most authentic art it is finally irreducible. In fact, such is the ease of Aymé's legerdemain, he nourishes the suspicion that perfection can be a gift.

Aymé is as capable of unadulterated charivari as of sheer sorcery. A sentimental mocker who lets the moral take care of itself, he is sly but he never really pinks. He evokes masterfully life's spontaneous disorders, yet he couldn't be more serious than when he leads off with "Once upon a time. . ."

The opening lines of most of these stories are like charms: "In his thirty-fifth year the dwarf belonging to the Cirque Barnaboum suddenly grew."

"The best Christian in the Rue Gabrielle was a certain Monsieur Duperrier, a man of such piety that God, without awaiting his death and while he was still in the prime of life, crowned his head with a halo which never left it by day or by night."

"[Dermuche] had murdered a family of three in order to get possession of a gramophone record he had coveted for several years."

"Noel Tournebise had so many marriageable daughters and so little memory that he could not recall their names and had to keep a list."

"There lived in Montmartre on the third floor of No. 75, Rue d'Orchampt, an excellent man named Dutilleul who possessed the singular gift of being able to walk through walls without experiencing any discomfort."

Barring one such supernatural aberration apiece, these individuals go on, or rather try to go on, functioning normally; they have no choice, for the irony of Aymé's fantasy is that it calls no general moratorium on physical law. Along with the stories where the afflatus is gay and altogether earthy, there are ones, like "Rue de l'Evangile," "The Seven League Boots," "The Picture-Well," that leave not only a tingle but an almost tragi-comic twinge as well. A prime example of Aymé's versatility—indeed his talent is more protean than original—is "Across Paris," which is the longest story here and the only one

narrated from an angle of intensely realistic insight. Nevertheless, this now-famous tale (it was filmed as "Four Bags Full") of wartime black-marketeers on a safari through the blacked-out City of Light, has an atmosphere fully charged with mystery.

In the ribald vein Aymé is subacid and very sure; when he ventures to lure the sanctity-afflicted into his range he becomes conspiratorial and arch, and the muse is stifled. He is grated by an abstract Tartuffe in whom he finds no genuine comic leverage: he has neglected to offer a humanly concrete projection of his attitude toward formal religion. This failure lays bare the vital dimensions Aymé lacks as a satirist. The great risk faced by the writer who sets out to deflate the illusions of human vanity is that in its own extravagance his laughter will cease to be tonic and will merely belittle, even contort.

To call even the most piquant of these drolleries "Rabelaisian" is forcing the pace, even though this has become the frozen epithet for Aymé. It implies an artificial context in which he appears least refreshing, and in this respect these stories cast some light on his novels. Life is relished in these novels without being affirmed; theirs is a wondrous world but wanting. Its creator is a fabulous realist but equally an epicurean, and the epicurean, in his passivity, leaves a certain taste of deception.

But Marcel Aymé is delightfully out of step with the age of analysis. He can turn reality upside down without any evident temptation to turn man inside out. He is not sounding the soul's desolate spaces; he holds his analysis to reason's absurd reductions. Yet all the while it is reality's own magic he is conjuring with.

REVIEWERS

Thomas F. Curley is a New York novelist and critic.

Garry Wills is engaged in advanced work at Yale University.

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In its simplest terms the principal problem of the Catholic journalist is to see the news in relation to a total view, he must understand the place of the news in the pattern of existing things and not as an isolated incident in a world of unrelated events. The function of the Catholic journalist is a *contextual* one, that of measuring the importance of events in the light of their special relationship with the rest of reality. This judgment should be the characteristic action of a good editor, and it is precisely along these lines that the principal deficiency of the Catholic press in the United States can be noted. Our failure, in short, is an editorial failure.

This philosophy of the total view is not one we can lightly set aside. When it is abandoned, we become the victims, as indeed we have, of sensationalism, sentimentalism and other forms of exaggeration. Just as in education, so in journalism we are not free to present to our readers isolated facts, as one might indiscriminately stuff rags into a bag. If such a course is followed, the results to the mind are just what you would expect; it merely bulges. The process of education is one of understanding the relationship of things, of appreciating a certain necessary hierarchy of values. When this process is confused with the gathering of information without the contextual pattern, it is the mind of the reader that suffers. . . .

When the editor lives in a world which recognizes a hierarchy of values, a discernible pattern of life and its supernatural meaning for man, his paper inevitably will carry some of his mind to its readers. When, on the other hand, a man—however pious—lives in a world whose order escapes him, he either pursues a single enthusiasm with extraordinary vigor, or leaps from one enthusiasm to the next with the changing tide.

—from an article in *The Commonweal* by Very Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Lally,
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